

Forming a New Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota

The Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) is based on the grass roots involvement of chapters at the local level to accomplish the purposes of the BCHA. The organization, the development of and approval of local chapters falls to the state chapters in each state.

In this document the procedures and requirements for forming a local chapter are outlined. The information in this document is considered a guideline. Groups interested in forming a local chapter of the Back Country Horsemen in Minnesota should contact the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota at bchminnesota@gmail.com for guidance and assistance.

Why Affiliate with Back Country Horsemen

Affiliation with Back Country Horsemen of America identifies you as a responsible voice for recreational stock use on public lands. This representation goes far beyond our local community and the trails we ride. BCHA and BCH-MN are recognized on a national, state, and regional level as a leader in low impact horse use education. Many of our members have been active participants in the "Leave No Trace" wild lands ethic movement as related to horse use.

BCHA has been working in the effort to enhance our visibility at the regional and national level by participating in activities such as wilderness seminars, national park symposiums, and trail conferences. We have representation in organizations such as the American Horse Council, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance Board of Directors and affiliate status with other trail advocacy organizations such as The Coalition for Recreational Trails, American Trails, The Partnership for the National Trails System, the National Recreational Trails Training Partnership, and the Wilderness Society.

By affiliating with the Back Country Horsemen of America and as a local chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota, your organization will be recognized as a group that seeks to improve trail access for recreational horsemen's use in a responsible and sustainable manner. Your group will also have the backing of both a recognized state and national organization to help you when necessary to accomplish your mission. The BCHA has grant money available to help local chapters support projects. The BCHA Educational Foundation is a separate 501 C.3 and local chapters can use the foundation to raise money for local projects with the contributions being tax deductible.

Purposes of Back Country Horsemen

The five purposes of the Back Country Horsemen are:

1. To perpetuate the common-sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the backcountry resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new state and local backcountry horsemen's organizations.

Forming a Chapter of BCH of Minnesota

The requirements and procedure for a group to form a chapter of BCH-MN are as follows:

1. The group shall have at least 15 members.
2. The group shall develop a set of by-laws for the chapter and select officers. These bylaws shall contain the purposes of the BCHA, and the purposes of the chapter shall coincide with those of the BCHA & BCH-MN. The name of the local chapter shall contain, the phrase "Back Country Horsemen" in its

name. Examples of such names are: "Southeast Minnesota Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota" and "Zumbro Bottoms Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota"

3. The group will then present to the Board of Directors of the BCH-MN, their bylaws along with a letter of request to become a chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota (BCH-MN)
4. After the bylaws are approved by the BCH-MN board, the new chapter will need to follow the procedures of the MN Secretary of State's to become recognized as a legal organization in MN.
5. Once these requirements have been met the organization will be officially recognized as a chapter of the BCH-MN and be given representation on the board of directors of the BCH-MN as specified in the bylaws of the BCH-MN.

Ideas/Suggestions for New Chapters

Reviewing the BCH-MN bylaws will provide a lot of guidance and ideas for the formation of a new chapter. The following points come either from the by-laws of BCH-MN or policies they have established over time:

- Officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers are usually elected at the annual meeting close to the beginning of the year. Terms are either 1 or 2 years and are served from that annual meeting through the next annual meeting. Duties should be outlined in the by-laws and sometimes vary based on chapter preferences.
- Directors: Usually elected at the annual meeting serving 2-year terms elected on staggered years. If the chapter chooses to do so, they frequently serve as the 'delegates' / directors on the State Board of Directors and are a primary means of communication between the State Board and the chapter officers and members.
- Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is normally made up of the officers and directors but may have members at large if the chapter wishes.
- Robert's Rules usually are used as the operating procedure of preference.
- Finances and record keeping/reporting:
 - Each chapter should have their own bank account.
 - The chapter collects its own membership information and dues (currently \$25 single and \$30 family) and submits the state portion (currently \$2 single and family) and the national portion (currently \$15 single and \$18 family) to the state treasurer quarterly. The state then accumulates the information and sends it on to BCHA.
 - In order for donations to be able to be deductible on a donor's income taxes, the donation must be made to a 501 c3 designated organization. BCH-MN is a 501 c3 organization but chapters can also choose to become a 501 c3 themselves. If a donation is made directly to a chapter not qualified as a 501 c3 organization, the donation would not be tax deductible to the donor. If the chapter is not a 501 c3 and the donor wants a donation to go to a specific chapter, they can make the donation to the state organization with instructions to forward the entire donation to the designated chapter. Whoever receives the donation (local or state) would be responsible for sending a thank you letter/receipt to the donor. It is recommended to set a \$ amount to trigger a letter/receipt - maybe \$100 or more.
 - Each chapter is responsible to provide BCH-MN with an annual report in a timely manner. The report would include information on membership, summary of finances, volunteer hours, and any other information as requested by the state by mid-January.
 - Record keeping/Reporting -
 - Chapters provide membership information (names, addresses, emails, etc.) to the state quarterly as memberships are received so that members would receive the BCHA newsletter in a timely manner.

- Chapters would track and report volunteer hours and other information as needed to complete the volunteer reports to MN agencies and the BCHA at the direction of the State Board.
- The BCH-MN officers and Board are responsible to accumulate all state data and communicate with and report to the national organization.

Example Bylaws

Below is an example of bylaws that can be used as a template. Your bylaws should reflect your own specific requirements while meeting the requirements outlined above.

By Laws of the (Chapter Name)

ARTICLE I Name

The name of this organization shall be the _____ Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota hereinafter referred to as the _____ BCH and shall be incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota. The _____ Back Country Horsemen is a chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota and as such is bound by the rules and policies of the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota and the Back Country Horsemen of America.

ARTICLE II Purpose

1. To perpetuate the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and wilderness areas.
2. To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational stock use.
3. To assist the various government, state and private agencies in their maintenance and management of said resource.
4. To educate, encourage and solicit active participation in the wise and sustaining use of the backcountry resource by horsemen and the general public commensurate with our heritage.
5. To foster and encourage the formation of new backcountry horsemen's organizations.

ARTICLE III Membership

1. Eligibility

Membership is open to any individual interested in the promoting the purpose of the _____ BCH organization.

2. Membership Types

(1) Individual membership. (2) Family membership consists of at least one adult and additional immediate family members, all living at the same address.

Article IV Dues

1. Applicable to the state and national requirements, the board of directors shall set the amount for _____ BCH membership dues. The membership year corresponds to the calendar year (January 1 through December 31).

2. _____ BCH shall submit dues to BCHMN (quarterly) no later than January 31 of the current calendar year and a report of _____ BCH membership as of 1 January of that year.

ARTICLE V Voting

1. Voting Eligibility

All members in good standing are entitled to vote on all matters voted upon during membership meetings. Individuals have one vote, while Family members have two votes (one per adult).

2. Quorum

For a vote on any matter to be accepted, a quorum must be present at the meeting. At regular meetings, 10% of the voting membership, in good standing, that is present will constitute a quorum. At a board meeting, a simple majority shall constitute a quorum. Exceptions are noted in Article X Section 1 and Article X Section 3.

3. Proxy

If a member wishes to vote on a matter, but cannot attend the meeting, the member may still vote by providing a written notice. The notice should contain the member's name, member's signature, the subject of the vote and the member's decision. The written notice may be delivered by any means to the Board of Directors, before or during the voting process. The Board of Directors shall file the Proxy vote according to the member's stated will. A Proxy vote shall count toward the Quorum.

ARTICLE VI Meetings

1. Membership Meetings

Regular membership meetings shall be held with a frequency and at a time and place decided upon by the board members. Notice of the regular meetings shall be announced to the members. The board may call special meetings. An annual membership meeting shall be held once a year for the purpose of election of officers and board members.

2. Board Meetings

Board meetings shall be held at a time and place decided upon by the board members. Regular members shall be welcome to attend board meetings, but they shall have no vote. Anyone who wants to attend a board meeting should contact a board member for the time and place and indicate if they have a matter they wish to present to the board.

ARTICLE VII Officers and Directors

1. Offices - The offices of this organization are president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

2. Directors - In addition to the officers, the board shall be comprised of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 additional members. An outgoing president will automatically become a member of the board.

3. Vacancies - Any vacancy for any officer or director for the balance of such term shall be filled by appointment of the president, excepting the presidency, which will automatically be filled by the vice president.

ARTICLE VIII Duties of Officers and Directors

1. Board of Directors (Officers and Board Members) - The supreme power and authority of this organization shall be lodged in its assembled meetings and the officers and directors shall conform to the wishes and instructions of the organization, but subject to such control and direction by the organization, the board of directors shall manage and execute the affairs of the organization. The board shall have the authority to make and execute decisions that are not in conflict with state law, the direction of the membership and policies set forth by the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota.

2. President - It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings of the organization and of the board, and to exercise general executive control over the affairs of the organization, and to call special meetings of the members and/or the board, and to perform all other duties pertaining to such office. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.

3. Vice President - The Vice President shall assist the President when called upon to do so, and in the president's absence, shall be vested with all the powers and duties of the president.

4. Secretary - The Secretary shall record and keep the minutes of all regular, special and board meetings; issue notices and perform such other duties as pertain to such office. The secretary shall be responsible for maintaining custody of the records and papers of the organization (such as charter, by-laws, etc.). Communication with the members through a regular newsletter shall be the responsibility of the secretary although the board may appoint another member to assist with this.

5. Treasurer - The Treasurer shall collect dues, keep and disburse all the funds of the organization and shall keep a written account of same which shall be open for inspection by any member in good standing, and shall furnish a written report of the state of the finances monthly, and shall be one of the three check signers of record, any one of which may validate a check. All funds shall be kept in a bank account. The treasurer shall be responsible for the submission of any records and tax returns required by law and shall prepare an annual statement.

6. Director - The directors shall formulate policies, approve procedures and programs, establish dues, attend meetings, and generally assist and support the functions and programs of the organization.

7. Nominating Committee - Two months prior to the regular election of officers and directors, the president, with the approval of the board, shall appoint a nominating committee. The purpose of the nominating committee shall be to provide a list of suitable candidates for officers and directors to the membership. The list shall be made available to the members one month prior to the election. Any member shall be allowed to submit a nomination to the committee. Any member shall be allowed to make a floor nomination during the election process.

3. Removal Action - Action to remove an officer or director requires a two-thirds majority vote of voting members at the regular meeting.

ARTICLE XI Committees

1. Creation - Committees to aid the function of this organization shall be designated by the President with the approval of the board.

2. Composition - The committee chairperson shall be appointed by the President and will in turn appoint their committee members as necessary to accomplish their committee's functions. Committees must be comprised of members in good standing.

ARTICLE XII Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meetings of the organization by two thirds vote of the membership, if notice of such proposed amendment shall be given to the organization at a regular meeting preceding the submission of such proposed amendments.

Article XIII Liquidation, Dissolution, or Termination

Section 1. In the event of liquidation, dissolution, or termination of the _____ BCH of MN any assets remaining shall be transferred to the Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota or to an-other Back Country Horsemen organization as determined by the SBD of Back Country Horsemen of Minnesota

These By Laws adopted by a vote of the membership of the (Chapter Name) on _____ (Date)

Signed by Officers:

President _____ Date:

Vice Pres _____ Date: